

## The Times-Dispatch

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MONDAY, AUGUST 11, 1913.

## BLAZING THE WAY FOR A STATE

Following the wise precedent set by its predecessor in 1909, the Senate Finance Committee will meet here a month before the General Assembly convenes to consider the state of the public finance and to formulate a tentative appropriation bill. If the House could be represented in this council better results might ensue, but the House Finance Committee does not yet exist. The Senate Finance Committee, constituted in 1912, comes to this preliminary labor with valuable experience derived from its part in constructing the appropriation bill in the last session.

While it is true that no especially beneficial effect was achieved in the General Assembly of 1910 by the preliminary meeting of the Senate Finance Committee, an excellent result undoubtedly grew out of it in the session of 1912, when the appropriation bill was disposed of several days before adjournment so that the last days of the session were devoted to the consideration and disposition of other measures. The Times-Dispatch perceives no reason why the appropriation bill should not be disposed of in the first thirty days of the session—certainly at least two weeks before adjournment. There is no excuse for that eleven-hour enactment of appropriation bills which is so common a fault in American legislatures, with its inevitable waste.

The course of the Senate Finance Committee will speed the time when we shall have an established legislative system with reference to the public finance. Its preliminary hearings will be of distinct and high public service because they will inform the people in advance of the demands which are to be made upon the public purse by the various institutions, departments and activities of the State government. The people will be enabled to form some idea of how it is proposed to expend their funds.

Yet the policy of the Senate Finance Committee will most serve the people in directing their attention to the need of some fixed system in the ordering of the outlay of the public revenue. No State needs a State budget more than Virginia. The appropriation bill ought to be framed well in advance of the legislative session by men of experience and competency; the measure that they recommend ought to be enacted practically unchanged unless public necessity urges substantial alterations. The nation needs such a budget system, and every State is in like need of it. The work of preparing a State budget should not be decentralized.

## WHAT MAKES RICHMOND?

Does it strike you as curious that Richmond has the reputation of being the "City of the Future"? We do not mean that old inhabitants can see changes that make the town look strange to them compared with past memories. Every city changes with the times. Yet it sometimes seems that Richmond is living an atmosphere and personality that has existed through all the mutations of our superficial life. There are evidences that we are being assimilated to the type town of 150,000 in the United States. For us to merge into the commonplace, average, undistinguished city shape would be a grave loss to our own people, and we are vain enough to think to the nation at large.

There is no denying the leveling tendency of a democracy and the quick and efficient means of communication and intercourse. The very school system and the public press tend to make everyone look alike, think alike and feel alike. There is a constant interchange of ideas, fashions, styles and fads. We Americans like to get results, and when we see some other community getting results we are anxious to profit by the lesson.

For Richmond to lose its characteristic charm would be a loss even on the lowest money basis. We get many conventions and gatherings because we are different. If we were just a plain city with little history or traditions, say, like Toledo, or Omaha or Rochester, how many people would be excited over the prospect of coming here? They would know exactly what to expect. Knowing that we have something unique here, they take the trouble to come and see us.

Far be it from us to want Richmond to stagnate in the reflection of past glories. We want everything new that will make us comfortable and happy. Yet we want these innovations with the hope that they will be made part and parcel of our life. We do not want them merely to make us a typical American city.

In a sense, the historical landmarks here are more valuable than the skyscrapers. Any community can build a huge edifice. None other can have a monument to mark John Smith's arrival at the falls of the James. Cer-

tainly none can have the splendid glory of the Confederacy inwoven in its very being.

We think it would be a good thing for Richmond to consider what makes it Richmond, and to take pains to preserve this local color and distinctive spirit. Outside of historical traditions, we judge that our chief mark is that we are a city of homes. It might be a good thing to keep up the home ideal here, despite the pressure from all sides to turn life over to institutions. This is just a hint, not an analysis. We would be glad to hear from others what they think is the finer spirit of Richmond town, and how we can keep the best of that while using all the best of the outer world.

## WE HAVE WITH US THIS WEEK—

For "better acquaintance" our friends and neighbors, representative merchants of the Southern States, come within our gates this week, only to go away, we feel sure, with that "old acquaintance" which shall never be forgotten. To every one of them Richmond gives her warmest, most cordial welcome, and to every one of them turns over every key in her basket. To every one of them Richmond expresses the hope that his sojourn will be enjoyed to the keenest degree and that if there is anything that he wants that he does not see he will ask for it.

The Times-Dispatch is of opinion that to-day begins a memorable week in the business history of Richmond. The deeper mutuality of interest created by the closer acquaintance of the business men of this city and the business men of our sister States will be a fine force for Richmond's commercial expansion. The spirit that such a meeting represents is the spirit that has built the South into an empire of commercial achievement and of commercial possibilities almost undreamed of a decade ago. The South cannot reach her destined business development until all her people and all her cities and towns work together for their common interests. Richmond desires to help the merchants and desires the merchants to help her, so that all may benefit.

It is not only good neighborhood, but good business, to buy what you need of the merchants in your home town. It is not only good neighborhood, but good business, for merchants to buy what they need in their home section. This basic principle is being preached as business gospel everywhere. It is sound. It is right. From its practice flow immeasurable benefits to him who practices it. Richmond wants her merchant guests to realize that she is interested in them and wishes them to be interested in her. Let us help each other to help ourselves.

Richmond feels that she is very especially honored in the presence of these guests and trusts that this is but the beginning of countless visits from them. The welcome that she can find no words to voice Richmond will express in her hospitality.

## THE HOUSTON TAX PLAN.

Since Virginia is seeking light on the tax question, we repeat here, without comment, the experience of Houston, Texas, with a kind of modified single tax. It has pleased the Texas city so well that the commissioner who introduced it was re-elected at the head of the municipal ticket with the largest majority ever given for that office.

The central idea is that land must be assessed at 100 cents on the dollar of real value. Buildings are assessed at 25 cents on the dollar. The difficult problem of personal property was solved at a cut by the exemption of all personal property, such as household goods and cash, from taxation. Public service corporations were made to pay a franchise tax for the use of the streets on an assessment of nearly \$2,000,000.

The results are so striking that they must prove some kind of a moral. The revenue of the city was increased \$100,000 per annum; the assessed value of all property was increased by \$22,000,000. The tax rate—terrible burdough of Richmond citizens and our responsive Council—was cut from \$175 to \$150 on the hundred dollars. Thanks to the equalization plan, almost 5,000 people paid less taxes in 1912 than they paid before.

Manifestly, says the Houstonian enthusiast, all this came from the practical application of justice to the tax question. If forced the burden of taxes on the owners of the land. No longer were they able to let land lie idle and pick up the "uncared increment." The reduction of taxes on buildings stimulated investment in improvements. Yet with all this, 5,000 people, or about one-half of all the taxpayers, came off lighter than before.

The example has already been followed by several Texas cities, and by Augusta, Ga. It is even reported in New York that a movement to try this plan is being backed by big business men. It is declared by observers that although this reform or change or what not was put in force despite the Texas laws on taxation, it is only a question of time until the legal system will be in accord with the facts believed here to have been demonstrated.

This may or may not be a hint for Virginia. At least it has the virtue of simplicity. It is comprehensible and does not create a hundred ridiculous tangles, with possible loopholes for evading the payment of a just share of the taxes. This ideal of simplicity is certainly a worth seeking in our own efforts at reform.

## THE WEST WOODS THE FARMHAND.

The farm labor problem in the West is acute. When the colleges closed, the farmers out there made all sorts of inducements to students to come to them and help with the crops. Evidently the response did not equal the demand. If the situation in North Dakota mirrors that in the rest of the territory, a dispatch from Devils Lake asserts that farm labor is so scarce in the surrounding rural districts that the commercial club in that

city has been appealed to for aid in securing workers for the fields, and that farmers have agreed to stop all work at 6 P. M. daily. In many instances they will supply automobiles to their farmhands, so that they may spend their evenings in town, where free concerts for them have been arranged. The farmhand finds his position one of increasing importance.

Scarcity of farm labor is a chronic condition in the West, as it is to a very great degree in the remainder of the country. The drift of rural population to the cities explains the problem. Nothing short of higher wages, shorter hours and more entertainment can hold the farmhand or lure him back from the city. The probabilities are that the farmer cannot order these things, and so the drift increases and farm labor decreases. Such a difficulty as that which North Dakota faces emphasizes the tremendous importance of the present-day movements for the enlargement of farm life, so that through various remedial agencies discontent with the conditions of labor on the farm may be destroyed.

## THE WORLD'S O. HENRY.

We are glad to publish another letter on O. Henry, and recommend it to our readers of literary bent as an example of the right method both of criticism and controversy. To begin with, it raises the whole theme from the provincial level by dealing impersonally with "the world's O. Henry." That is, doubtless, what his friends and admirers would have him called. This letter also substantiates our first claim that O. Henry was not in any sense a North Carolina writer. It may well be that he was a devoted son of the Old North State, yet his love does not shine forth in his writings.

The point of this letter, however, is its frank comparison of Henry with Poe, De Maupassant and Kipling. It is easy enough to say that he was a "combination of these three." We enjoy more than this quick generalization an analysis of the claim based on literary standards. For our objection has ever been, not to the praise of O. Henry, but to the slipshod overestimate of his ability and genius, which undermines its own end, because it seems to predicate a deep ignorance of ultimate standards according to which we may call a man "great."

Here, again, our correspondent gives the Henryites a nice fling. Henry was no combination; he was "utterly original." Looking at it largely, under the sun that sees no newness, we think this, too, is extravagant; yet we can all agree that he was "different." Therein lies his charm, and a clue to the fact that, although he has had countless imitators, he has no successor. In brief, Poe was mystical and psychological; De Maupassant was coldly, impersonally truthful about many unpleasant themes; Kipling is at bottom a poet, and his stories bear the stamp of commercial pot-boilers. Henry was objective and straightforward, personal and never risqué, not a poet, but always a devoted artist in short-story form.

## THE EDUCATION OF PRISONERS.

Out of fifty-five prisons reporting to the United States Department of Education, forty-four have established schools for the education of prisoners. Of that number thirty-three have employed teachers from the outside, twenty-seven conduct evening schools and nineteen have day schools—all teaching academic and trade subjects.

This means nothing more nor less than that in these prisons the ideal of a sound mind in a sound body is set up by those in authority. In most of the States an enlightened policy is pursued with reference to the sound physical health of prisoners, but the tendency to conserve their sound mental health is not so marked. Prison schools have their main value in supplying good environment for prisoners. They help the individual to regain his normal condition. If he is fired by an ambition to re-establish himself in life, education is a stimulus to strengthen his impulse. Moreover, it endows him with a valuable asset for service to him when he is beyond prison walls.

Has the State a right to enforce mental idleness on the part of any man? Has it the right to deprive any man of incentive? The modern view is that both these queries must have a negative answer. The State's social responsibility urges it to open the door of self-betterment to its prison population. The man who has nothing to think about but himself soon wanders to the verge of insanity, if he does not fall over it. He must have something else to think about, and modern penology asserts that the State must be the source of supply of that something else.

The meanest man of the week is the Trenton fellow who stole \$100 raised by friends to buy his father cork legs.

"Things might be worse," says the Richmond Virginian. As a matter of fact, we think they are. Thus philosophizes the Bristol Herald-Courier. In these two brief remarks lies all the difference between the standpatter and the progressive. One looks down and back and says we might be worse off; the other looks forward and up, and says it is certain we can do better.

The deadlock in the West Virginia debt confab seems to be on the vault of the West Virginia treasury.

If John Lind wants to send back some really interesting information, let him tell us exactly what part the big money brokers are playing in Mexican affairs. We would know better what to do then.

## On the Spur of the Moment

By Roy K. Moulton

## The Weather.

Old Hiram Purdy does allow that he saw his old blind cow "Rub up agin" the barnyard fence and then gaze at the moon. He says that ten times out of nine this is a sure and certain sign. A spell of rainy weather is a comin' mighty soon.

Old Grandma Tubbs desires to state her hens are actin' queer of late. They don't seem pleased about their food and all refuse to lay. She's willin' to put up a bet, by gum, she never missed it yet. The best plan is to simply take the weather as it comes.

The Refect Discourteous. Husband—I hope I have made myself plain. Wife—That was entirely unnecessary. Nature did it for you.

## The Diary of a Housemaid.

In the olden days, when a man couldn't find anything else in the world to do, he went into the life insurance business. Now he either goes into the life insurance business or he sells vacuum cleaners, with the odds in favor of the latter.

When vacuum cleaners first became rampant in this country, about five years ago, my wife thought that we would all be killed by microbes within five minutes if we didn't have a vacuum cleaner. This in spite of the fact that we had used an old-fashioned broom in our house ever since we had been married. The vacuum cleaner men and the microbes apparently work hand in hand, advertising each other, like the breakfast food and the actress who recommends it. We bought a vacuum cleaner and we have bought about one a month ever since. Every man who came along with a vacuum cleaner had a little better cleaner than the man who had preceded him. It seemed to me that a vacuum cleaner was a poorer vacuum cleaner than the man who had preceded him. A man with a vacuum cleaner had a better one. Every vacuum cleaner had some little rewhilliker attachment that made it seem a little more efficient than the preceding one. Judging by the improvement in vacuum cleaners since we purchased our first one, that first one could not have caught more than one microbe out of 10,000.

Nothing goes out of style quicker than a vacuum cleaner, unless it is a silk hat or an automobile. The first one we had worked with a handle like a suction pump and a person with magnificent physique and in good training could go over the floor of a small room in one day without breaking his back. You held the cleaner with one hand and pulled with the other and coaxing

the microbes out of a six-by-eight rug was a process which occupied an entire day.

Then they got the electric vacuum cleaners. We didn't have any electric lights in the house at that time, but had them put in just so we could operate an electric vacuum cleaner. No body in the world was going to have anything on us in the way of cleaners.

After filling the cellar, the barn and the garage with vacuum cleaners that were a week or two behind the times, we swore off and we didn't buy a vacuum cleaner for two months.

Yesterday a man came along with a new vacuum cleaner that would pull the tacks out of a carpet or would yank the paper off the wall. It would pull a mustard plaster off from a man's back. When placed at one end of the room, it would tear out a plate glass window in the other end of the room. It cleaned up all of the known microbes, and, as it was working only half capacity while so doing, they had invented 3,000 or 4,000 microbes that had never been heard of before, just to keep the vacuum cleaner busy. In other words, when they began working the new cleaner, it had pulled in microbes that the scientists had never had the nerve to discover, so tremendous was its strength.

We put a mortgage on the house and bought one.

## Voice of the People

Some Real Criticism of O. Henry.

To the Editor of The Times-Dispatch: Sir—I read the letter about North Carolina and O. Henry, signed "Vane," as well as your editorial on the same subject in your issue of August 1. The writer's patriotism to "down home" is striking, and his effort to rivet



Commercialism is a great muffler. As long as a fellow hasn't considered rich he stands a pretty fair show in a community.

O. Henry to North Carolina is a praise-worthy but impossible task. We have Henry's memory and bade his State from his fancy. As far as O. Henry's being a "combination of Poe, Kipling and De Maupassant," the writer evidently could not have been familiar with any of these writers. O. Henry was utterly original. He was no combination. His methods, his tricks of diction, his backgrounds, and his ability to live for other people made him what he was. He is further from resembling Poe than any writer on earth. Poe dealt with the subtle, extravagant, the fantastic, the idealistic, the subjective, the psychological. Can any one imagine O. Henry's writing "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Imp of the Perverse," "Berenice," or any other of Poe's works? Poe was the founder and father of the detective story. O. Henry never wrote one orthodox detective story. His greatest story, "A Municipal Report," saved of the detective story, but lacked in its technique.

Guy de Maupassant and O. Henry are fully as far removed. Maupassant resembled Poe only that he employed brevity, whereas Poe employed the exhaustive method of exposition. He described a man with a word; Poe with a page. Then, too, Maupassant and O. Henry differ most markedly in their subject matter. Maupassant's subjects too require for American publication. O. Henry was as pure as spring water in his writings. Maupassant is cold, impersonal, unsympathetic. He takes for his motto, "Je n'impose rien, je ne propose rien, j'expose." O. Henry's stories are didactic. He is in his tales soul and body. O. Henry could not have produced "The Last Leaf" or "The Gift of the Magi" or "Mademoiselle Fifi" or "L'Excursion de Madame Teller." O. Henry was incapable of such action.

Rudyard Kipling and O. Henry are entirely unlike. Kipling is a poet. O. Henry is a short-story writer. Kipling owes his fame to his poetry—its irresistible, mellifluous meter—its use of Indian English—its wild abandon—its military thrills. His way to greatness would have been long and rough by his stories alone. Some of them "hang heavy" on the reader. Commercialism ruined them. They bear the stamp of being reeled off so much a word. O. Henry never published a poem that we know of. His fame is in his stories. They are enough. They are always teeming with interest. The reader needs no Coca Cola to read O. Henry by the midnight oil. O. Henry could not have written "Namay Doola" nor the "Thantom Rickshaw" nor any of Kipling's works, nor could Kipling ever have found the human sympathy requisite to the production of "The Last Leaf" or "The Gift of the Magi." O. Henry is individual, incomparable. He is not a combination. If he resembles any one writer it is Virginia's own son, Dr. George W. Babbie.

Edgar Allan Poe is and always will be America's greatest short-story writer. He is Europe's only American man of letters. Henry lacks his subtle insight, his encyclopedic erudition, his analytic genius. In Henry the earmarks of university training are missing. Poe amazes you with his cleverness. Henry's light will never attain unto the brilliance of Poe's.

ROBERT C. ASTORP, Surrey, Va., August 2, 1913.

## Better Acquaintance

THE movement which brings to Richmond many of the influential merchants of the South is significant of the "Get-together-spirit" of the times. Business is no longer conducted along the lines of a decade ago—quick transportation and intercommunication make for a personal attitude between buyer and seller.

THE bank is one of the foundation stones of modern business and was one of the first to feel the "Better Acquaintance" trend of the times. It was one of the first to feel and to accept the change in the conducting of business. The banking institution has long since ceased to be merely a depository of funds or an agent for the exchange of moneys. The bank does not hoard the deposits received, but uses them to assist the business development of the country.

THIS institution from its beginning has kept that principle foremost—the development of worthy business enterprises, more especially, those of the South. It is heartily in sympathy with the "BETTER ACQUAINTANCE WEEK" movement and cordially welcomes the visiting merchants. We hope that they will take advantage of the conveniences and facilities we offer, and extend to them an invitation to visit our handsome banking-rooms (one of the most artistic in the city).

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